



Philanthropy creates new therapeutic playground for children at Upstate

The Upstate Foundation and Upstate Medical University recently celebrated the opening of a new therapeutic playground at Golisano Children's Pavilion, marking another important milestone in the Foundation's 50th anniversary year. The event was also a celebration of the donors who answered the call with an additional \$1 million when the need for a therapeutic outdoor space for children receiving inpatient mental health care emerged toward the end of the Foundation's Child & Adolescent Mental Health Campaign.

The approximately 9,660-square-foot project was designed and managed by a robust Upstate project team and Parkitects, a company specializing in creating inclusive and participatory play spaces for children of all ages and abilities. The sensory-friendly playground features swings, slides, basketball, walking path, hopscotch and other activities that encourage movement, social interaction and therapeutic engagement.

"For 50 years, philanthropy has helped make important projects like this possible," said Julie Simms, senior director of development and campaign management at the Upstate Foundation. "This playground is another reflection of the giving spirit of individuals and organizations whose impact will leave a lasting imprint on the hearts of countless children."

During the donor appreciation event, Upstate leaders and members of the care team highlighted the important role philanthropy plays in expanding innovative care for children and families.

"The playground will help create everyday moments of joy for children," said Mantosh Dewan, MD, president of Upstate Medical University. "One of the favorite things I enjoy in the summer is the unseen squeals of joy of children playing outside. You don't know who they are, but you can hear them. Because of the generosity of donors, that will happen every day here forever."

For the Skaneateles Cares Care Club, a major donor to the playground project, the project represented an opportunity for a group of community members to make a meaningful difference.

"Our effort toward this contribution all started with a bunch of car people who wanted to make a difference in the community," said Ed Keller and Duane Wiedor of Skaneateles Cares Care Club. "It's been an honor for the club to work with the staff at the Upstate Foundation to provide such a great inclusive playground for children."

The playground serves patients in the Biobehavioral Health Unit and Inpatient Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Unit at Upstate University Hospital, and provides new opportunities for clinicians to incorporate outdoor activity into individualized treatment plans.

"This is more than a playground; it is an extension of the treatment setting," said Henry Roane, PhD, executive director of the Golisano Center for Special Needs and the Biobehavioral Health Unit. "It allows clinicians to apply therapeutic skills in a natural environment, observe behaviors in real-world contexts, and strengthen communication and social development."

Caption: Members of Skaneateles Cares Car Club, major donors to the playground project, enjoy a ride on "Joshua's Jeep," the centerpiece of the pavilion playground.